

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Presently Amended) Method of preparing microcapsules having a core with dimensions ranging from 50 to 1200 μm and a polymeric membrane containing at least one active ingredient and, optionally, at least one membrane additive characterised in that the application of said polymeric membrane to said core is carried ~~out~~ out by a process of coacervation by means of phase separation of a suspension of said active ingredient and, optionally, of said membrane additive in a solution of a water-soluble or a water-insoluble coating polymer.
2. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 1 comprising the following steps:
 - (a) forming a solution of ~~said coating~~ the membrane polymer in an aqueous or in an organic solvent;
 - (b) suspending the cores, the particles of active ingredient and, optionally, any membrane additive in the solution obtained in (a),
 - (c) causing coacervation of the ~~coating~~ membrane polymer in the suspension obtained in (b) by means of phase separation, thereby forming a polymeric membrane,
 - (d) optionally, subjecting the microcapsules to a hardening treatment of the membrane₁;
 - (e) recovering the microcapsules thereby obtained.
3. (Original) Method as claimed in claim 2 wherein step a) and b) are carried out as a single step.
4. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~claims 1 to 3~~ claim 2, wherein ~~said coating polymer~~ the membrane polymer is a water insoluble polymer, the solution of said polymer is in an organic solvent and said active ingredient is water-soluble.
5. (Original) Method as claimed in claim 4 wherein said polymer is ethylcellulose.
6. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 4 ~~or 5~~ wherein the solvent used in step a) is cyclohexane.

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7. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 4 ~~to 6~~ wherein the additive added in step b) is selected from the group consisting of lactose, mannitol, polyvinylpyrrolidone, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydroxypropylcellulose, swelling agents, ~~such as~~ sodium carboxymethylamide, croscarmellose, crospovidone, pregelatinized starch, ~~and~~ pH modifiers and combinations thereof.

8. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~claims 4 to 7~~ claim 4, wherein in step c) phase separation takes place by variation in temperature.

9. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~claims 1 to 3~~ claim 2, wherein ~~said coating the~~ membrane polymer is a water soluble polymer, the solution of said polymer is in an aqueous solvent and said active ingredient is water-insoluble.

10. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 9 wherein said polymer is selected from the group consisting of gelatine, cellulose acetate phthalate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate ~~or~~ and derivatives thereof.

11. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 9 ~~or 10~~, wherein the solvent used in step a) is water at a pH comprised between 1 and 9.

12. (Previously Presented) Method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pH is comprised between 4 and 7.

13. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~claims 9 to 12~~ claim 9, wherein the additive added in step b) is selected from the group consisting of dibasic calcium phosphate, calcium sulphate, barium sulphate, calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, ~~and~~ silicates, and combinations thereof.

14. (Presently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 9 ~~to 13~~, wherein in step c) phase separation takes place by pH variation, variation in temperature or insolubilisation of the polymer by adding phase-separation inducing agents.

15. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules comprising a core having dimension ranging from 50 to 1200 μm and a polymeric membrane coating said core based on a water-soluble coating

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polymer and containing at least one water-insoluble active ingredient dispersed therein in the form of solid particles, said particles being dispersed inside said polymeric membrane with a concentration that decreases progressively moving from the core towards the distal part of the membrane.

16. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, obtainable by a method as claimed in ~~claims 4 to 8~~ claim 4.

17. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 and 16~~ claim 15 wherein the taste of the active principle is masked.

18. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 17~~ claim 15 characterised by a modified release of the active principle.

19. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 18 wherein said modified release is a delayed release.

20. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 19~~ claim 15, wherein the water-soluble polymer is chosen from gelatine, cellulose acetate phthalate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate and derivatives thereof.

21. (Presently Amended) Microcapsule as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 20~~ claim 15, wherein said polymeric membrane further contains water-insoluble membrane additives.

22. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules comprising a core having dimension ranging from 50 to 1200 μm and a polymeric membrane coating said core based on a water-insoluble coating polymer and containing at least one water-soluble active ingredient homogeneously dispersed therein in the form of solid particles, said water-insoluble coating polymer being present in amounts ranging from 2% to 40% and said active principle being present in amounts ranging from 01% to 40%, with respect to the weight of the microcapsule.

23. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22 obtainable with the method claimed in ~~claims 9 to 14~~ claim 9.

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24. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 22 or 23~~ claim 22 characterised by a modified release of the active ingredient.

25. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 22 to 24~~ claim 22, wherein the water-insoluble polymer is selected from ethylcellulose and its derivatives.

26. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 22 to 25~~ claim 22, wherein the polymeric membrane contains water-soluble additives.

27. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 26~~ claim 15, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm .

28. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 27, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 1 to 30 μm , and ranges from 0.2 to 21% by weight of the microcapsules.

29. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 28~~ claim 15, wherein the core constitutes 50% to 95% by weight of the microcapsules and the coating polymer varies from 2 to 20% by weight of the microcapsule.

30. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 29~~ claim 15, wherein the membrane contains additives having a mean diameter ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm and constituting from 2 to 10% by weight of the microcapsule.

31. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 30, wherein the membrane additives have a mean diameter ranging from 7 to 30 μm and constitute from 3% to 5% by weight of the microcapsule.

32. (Presently Amended) Microcapsules as claimed in ~~claims 15 to 31~~ claim 15 coated with a further coating layer.

33. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm .

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34. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 33, wherein the active ingredient has dimension ranging from 1 to 30 μm , and ranges from 0.2 to 21% by weight of the microcapsules.

35. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the core constitutes 50% to 95% by weight of the microcapsules and the coating polymer varies from 2 to 20% by weight of the microcapsule.

36. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the membrane contains additives having a mean diameter ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm and constituting from 2 to 10% by weight of the microcapsule.

37. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 36, wherein the membrane additives have a mean diameter ranging from 7 to 30 μm and constitute from 3% to 5% by weight of the microcapsule.

38. (New) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22 coated with a further coating layer.